

To the Chairman and Members of the Northampton Rural District Council.

JANUARY, 1906.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1905, with the usual tables. I have estimated the population at the same total as in the previous year. There has been a small amount of building done at Duston, but I believe that this increase is only about sufficient to make up for the deficiency shown to be going on in this district by the last census returns. At present building operations at Weston Favell have not commenced.

The total number of births during the year was 133—11 less than in 1904 and 23 less than in 1903: altogether it is the least number of births occurring during the last ten years, and only shows a birth rate of 20·2 per 1,000. Of these births 62 were males and 71 females. The average birth rate of the district for the last ten years is 26.

The number of deaths in children under one year of age was only 12, giving a ratio per 1,000 births registered of 90; this ratio is exactly the same as last year, when there were 13 deaths in this class, but then the total number of births was larger. This is a much lower average than the mean for the last ten years, which stands at 121.

The total number of deaths for the whole district was 151, giving a ratio per 1,000 of 23·7. Of these deaths, however, 83 occurred in Berry Wood Asylum, so that deducting these we reduce our total to only 68 deaths of residents in the district, giving a ratio of only 12·7 per 1,000. Last year there were 79 deaths with a ratio of 14·7 per 1,000, and the average for the last ten years is 78 deaths, with an average of about 14 per 1,000, so that the death rate for the district is exceedingly low, and was only as low as this in 1902. The deaths in Berry Wood Asylum were also as low as they have been during the last ten years.

Table II. shows the comparisons between the births and deaths in the three sub-divisions of the district during the present year, and also during the last ten years. In the Weston Favell district the births are exactly the same as in the previous year, while there were 7 deaths less; this district has now been considerably curtailed since Abington was taken from it and given to the town, so that no comparison can be drawn in this case from the average of the last ten years. In the Duston sub-district there were 36 births and 16 deaths against 35 and 15 respectively in the previous year. In the Kislingbury sub-district there were 78 births and 43 deaths against 90 and 48 in the previous year. Thus the great deficiency in births is due to the Kislingbury district, whilst in the other two the numbers were about stationary, whilst the deaths are less in the Weston Favell and Kislingbury districts and nearly stationary in the Duston district.

Table III. shows the cases of infectious disease notified during the year. There was a total of 76, which compares as follows with the previous years:—

1904	...	...	...	103 cases.
1903	...	...	...	21 „
1902	...	...	...	30 „
1901	...	...	...	21 „
1900	...	...	...	12 „

The large total in the last two years is almost entirely due to the number of scarlet fever cases that have occurred in this district during these years—83 in 1904 and 69 in 1905. There can be no doubt that scarlet fever is more prevalent in this district than formerly, and I attribute it to the fact that scarlet fever has also been very prevalent in the town of Northampton, and it is carried into our district by the free intercommunication that exists with the town. Thus, of the 22 cases in the Kislingbury sub-district most of them occurred in the village of Harpole, which is a large shoe-making village with persons continually passing backwards and forwards to and from Northampton. Duston again is close to the town, and many cases of scarlet fever there I could

trace in all probability to children going to school in the town, at St. James' End Schools. I do not understand why children should undergo this risk when there is a large school in the village of Duston. It must not be forgotten, though, that 23 of these cases of scarlet fever this year broke out at Berry Wood Asylum, so that if we deduct these there is a total of only 46 cases in the district proper, or only about half the number that occurred in 1904; at Berry Wood, again, the disease was introduced by visitors from the town. In the Weston Favell district the disease was limited to two families, one large one at Weston Favell and another at Great Billing. In the latter case an endeavour was made to check the disease by removing the first case to the Hardingstone Infectious Hospital, but it was unsuccessful, as several children in this family afterwards fell with it, but fortunately it did not spread to the rest of the village. Five of these scarlet fever cases were this year removed to the Hospital—three to the Hardingstone Infectious Hospital and two to the Borough Hospital as we have at present no isolation hospital of our own. Other means taken to check the disease have been by distributing handbills containing advice to the people as to the means to be taken to check the spread of the disease, and by freely disinfecting and distributing disinfectants.

No case of enteric fever has occurred in the district itself during the year, but one case was notified at Berry Wood Asylum.

Two cases of diphtheria were notified. One was in a child living in one of two isolated cottages on the road from Weston Favell to Buttocks Booth, there were a large number of children also living in the house but none of them contracted the disease. A drain was not in very good order, and instructions were given to rectify it, but it is difficult to understand why this should cause diphtheria in one child and not in any of the others who were all living under the same conditions. Similarly the water supply and milk supply were the same to all the occupants of these two cottages, and yet only one contracted the disease. The other case of diphtheria was notified from Bugbrooke. Here an old farmyard existed, the drainage of which was not first-class and the water supply was considered impure, and on analysis was classed as "suspicious, probably from washing-up water entering the well." The drainage of the yard was ordered to be attended to, and no more cases were notified; unfortunately, however, this case proved fatal.

Practically, then, if we exclude the cases of scarlet fever—which were all of a mild type, without a single fatal case—there were only these two cases of serious infectious disease notified during the year, a result which I consider very satisfactory.

The schools at Harpole and Great Billing have been closed on account of scarlet fever, and during part of December the schools at Great Billing have been closed on account of an epidemic of whooping cough.

Table IV. deals with the causes of death during the year. There were six deaths in children under five years of age from whooping cough, most of them (four) in the Kislingbury sub-district; this is a much higher average death rate from this cause than we have had for some years. No deaths from either diarrhoea or enteritis was reported during the year, which again is very satisfactory. Six cases of tubercular disease, six of cancer, and ten of diseases of the respiratory organs were recorded. There were eight deaths from heart disease, and two cases of suicide. This completes the deaths from special causes during the year.

The sewage scheme at Duston is working better and there have been no complaints of bad sinells arising from it. The effluent from the septic tank at Bugbrooke is also satisfactory, and no pollution of the river now arises from that village. A filtering tank has also been provided for the sewage from the village of Harpole, so that the effluent from that village is also now very much improved.

After many vicissitudes the Northampton Town Council have agreed to supply the village of Duston with water from their town supply. A scheme has accordingly been drawn up and submitted to the Local Government Board. An enquiry has been held by one of their Inspectors, and the scheme has been approved by the Local Government Board. The works are now in progress, and pipes are being laid to the village, so that very shortly I hope it will receive a plentiful supply of good water. This will be a great boon to the inhabitants, who have long suffered from both a deficient and impure supply.

The water supply at Kislingbury and Heyford still proves very satisfactory, and there has been no hitch in the working of either of these supplies during the year.

There has been no occasion to use the hospital tent provided for an emergency should small pox break out, but the tent is still held in reserve. On several occasions, however, we have found it necessary to make use of the arrangement with the Northampton Town Council to disinfect contaminated bedding and other articles after infectious disease. A difficulty has arisen in respect to conveying these infectious articles to and fro, as the Northampton Authorities refuse to allow us to use their ambulance for this purpose. I think the difficulty would be best met by the provision of an ambulance for this purpose for the use of this Authority.

No necessity has arisen at present under the Midwives Act to disinfect any clothing, &c., that may get infected in cases of puerperal fever, but provision has been made should such an emergency arise to disinfect such articles by the Borough Authorities.

The dairies and cowsheds have been periodically visited, and twice a year a detailed report is made on them by the Sanitary Inspector to your Council. Since this arrangement has been in force there is no doubt that a vast improvement in this class of building has taken place in your district.

A return is given as to the work done by the Sanitary Inspector under the Factories and Workshops Act. There are only two very small factories, and the workshops are usually small isolated buildings in which two or more members of the family work at bootmaking. They are regularly visited, and in a favourable condition; it is seldom that a complaint can be made of them. The bakehouses are clean and are kept regularly whitewashed; there are no underground bakehouses.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

G. H. PERCIVAL, M.B.,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

